

CONOR LAMB

17TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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April 1, 2022

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Marty Walsh
Secretary
United States Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Secretary Cardona, Secretary Becerra and Secretary Walsh,

As Congress considers changes to federal policy on marijuana, I urge the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor to study the impact of legalization on schools, school-aged children, and the workplace, and develop best practices for protecting worker and student safety. Parents, educators, and employers across the country have expressed concerns regarding decriminalizing marijuana, from creating unsafe working and learning environments to affecting productivity. Many in authority roles are left with more questions than answers on how to navigate future policy changes on this subject, and I believe we should use the federal government's resources to better prepare and prioritize safety with this important potential transition.

With evolving policy efforts and the potential increase in the availability of legal marijuana, educators need guidance to support the prevention of marijuana use among youth. As an article in the Journal of American Pediatrics explained, "although decriminalization policies apply to the use of marijuana by adults, they may affect adolescents by increasing availability and access

while decreasing perceptions of harm.”¹ Research has shown that marijuana’s negative effects on attention, memory, and learning can last for days or weeks after the acute effects of the drug wear off, depending on the person’s history with the drug. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) there is considerable evidence that suggests that students who smoke marijuana have poorer educational outcomes than their nonsmoking peers, including reducing chances of graduating.²

Employers face similar challenges, especially those whose industry involves dangerous and heavy machinery. Studies have shown THC in marijuana affects judgment, motor coordination, and reaction time. According to a study reported by NIDA, employees who tested positive for marijuana had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries, and 75% greater absenteeism compared to those who tested negative.³ I appreciate the work the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is currently doing on information and resources regarding impairment testing for the workplace and urge its continuation. I also agree with NIOSH’s call for additional research on the impact of marijuana on workplace safety.⁴ As Congress considers legislation that would allow for greater access, it is imperative we protect workers throughout this process.

While I support the decriminalization of marijuana, it is essential our educators and employers have all the information and tools they need in order to maintain safe and productive environments for their students and workforce. The House has taken the first step by passing the MORE Act (H.R. 3617) and including my amendment that directs the Department of Education and NIOSH to further study potential impacts of legalization so our businesses and educators will have the safeguards necessary to succeed. However, this bill faces an uncertain future in the Senate, so I urge your agencies to take up these studies under your existing authorities. This research should include:

- A study conducted by the Department of Education on the impact of legalization to schools and school-aged children, using states that have legalized recreational use of cannabis as a guide. The Department of Education should also develop best practices for educators and administrators to protect children from any negative impacts.
- A study through NIOSH on the impact of legalization to the workplace, using states that have legalized recreational use of cannabis as a guide. NIOSH should also develop best practices for employers as companies transition their policies related to cannabis, prioritizing employers engaged in federal infrastructure projects, transportation, public safety, and national security. NIOSH should involve the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in this study to the maximum extent possible.

¹ https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/145/Supplement_2/S165

² <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/how-does-marijuana-use-affect-school-work-social-life>

³ <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/how-does-marijuana-use-affect-school-work-social-life>

⁴ <https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2020/06/15/cannabis-and-work/>

I believe these studies will better prepare our educators and employers for potential future policy changes and enable the country to move forward using a systematic and considered approach. I look forward to working with your respective agencies as this policy debate progresses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Conor Lamb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Conor Lamb
Member of Congress